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SNAPSHOT

Yarn Spins Five Times Faster With New Wheels

A small investment in solar-powered spinning machines increased production and income for 700+ Jalalabad wool spinners, all of them women.



Photo: ABADE/Hedayatullah Samizada

Mrs. Sharifa Ahmadzai, owner of Ali Sahil, instructs workers in using and maintaining the new solar-powered spinning wheels.

The spinning wheels are portable, enabling the women to work from home.

In Afghanistan, the hand-made carpets created by Ali Sahil String Making and Carpet Weaving Company are prized for their elegant designs and distinctive Afghan craftsmanship.

With a recent investment in new equipment, the company is now poised for even greater success. Yarn production has increased five-fold, and the all-woman staff has grown from 500 to more than 700 women.

Owner Sharifa Ahmadzai recognized the potential for growth in the increased demand for her carpets and the opportunity to sell her yarn to other carpetmakers. But the potential could only be realized by an equipment upgrade; most of her staff were using manual equipment to spin yarn.

Mrs. Ahmadzai approached USAID's Assistance in Building Afghanistan by Developing Enterprises (ABADE) project for support in investing in new equipment. After a thorough analysis of her business plan, ABADE provided 115 sets of motorized spinning machines, solar panels and batteries. The equipment is portable, allowing workers to continue spinning at home.

The impact of the investment was monumental.

"Whereas before a worker produced half a kilo of spun yarn per day, she can now comfortably produce 2.5 kilos in the same amount of time, and the yarn is of the same quality as the manually spun string," Mrs. Ahmadzai said.

Because of the increased production capacity, Mrs. Ahmadzai hired 230 additional spinners to start filling new orders.

Zarlakhta is one of the workers happily enjoying much easier and more efficient work using the motorized spinners.

"Between spinning and doing household chores, I am still able to spin more than 2 kilos of yarn per day. It is good in every way—the work is lighter and faster, I am able to work from home, and my earnings are higher," she said.